



COMMANDER NAVY REGION HAWAII

SAFETY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2005

www.hawaii.navy.mil/Safety/index.htm



Work-Related Hearing Loss

Work-related hearing loss continues to be a critical workplace safety and health issue. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the occupational safety and health community named hearing loss one of the 21 priority areas for research in the next century. Noise-induced hearing loss is 100 percent preventable but once acquired, hearing loss is permanent and irreversible. Therefore, prevention measures must be taken by employers and workers to ensure the protection of workers' hearing.

MAGNITUDE

Approximately 30 million workers are exposed to hazardous noise on the job and an additional nine million are at risk for hearing loss from other agents such as solvents and metals.

Noise-induced hearing loss is one of the most common occupational diseases and the second most self-reported occupational illness or injury. Industry specific studies reveal:

- 44% of carpenters and 48% of plumbers reported that they had a perceived hearing loss.
- 90% of coal miners will have a hearing impairment by age 52 (compared to 9% of the general population); 70% of male, metal/nonmetal miners will experience a hearing impairment by age 60.

While any worker can be at risk for noise-induced hearing loss in the workplace, workers in many industries have higher exposures to dangerous levels of noise. Industries with high numbers of exposed workers include: agriculture; mining; construction; manufacturing and utilities; transportation; and military.

COSTS

There is no national surveillance or injury reporting system for hearing loss. As such, comprehensive data on the economic impact of hearing loss are not available.

Some estimates find that occupational hearing loss compensation costs alone are in the hundreds of millions of dollars per year. The following examples provide an indication of the economic burden of occupational hearing loss.

Washington State, workers' compensation disability settlements for hearing-related conditions cost \$4.8 million in 1991. This figure does not include medical costs or personal costs, which can include approximately \$1500 for a hearing aid and around \$300 per year for batteries. Moreover, workers' compensation data are an underestimate of the true frequency of occupational illness, representing only the tip of the iceberg.

In British Columbia, in the five-year period from 1994 to 1998, the workers' compensation board paid \$18 million in permanent disability awards to 3,207 workers suffering hearing loss. An additional \$36 million was paid out for hearing aids.

Through their hearing conservation program, the U.S. Army saved \$504.3 million by reducing hearing loss among combat arms personnel between 1974 and 1994. Between 1987 and 1997, as a result of military efforts to reduce civilian hearing loss, the Department of Veterans Affairs saved \$220.8 million and the Army an additional \$149 million.



PREVENTION

Removing hazardous noise from the workplace through engineering controls (e.g. installing a muffler or building an acoustic barrier) is the most effective way to prevent noise-induced hearing loss. Hearing protectors such as earplugs and earmuffs should be used when it is not feasible to otherwise reduce noise to a safe level. NIOSH recommends hearing loss prevention programs for all workplaces with hazardous levels of noise. These programs should include noise assessments, engineering controls, audiometric monitoring of workers' hearing, and appropriate use of hearing protectors, worker education, record keeping, and program evaluation.

For more information on occupational hearing loss or other work-related injuries or illnesses contact NIOSH at 1-800-35-NIOSH or visit the NIOSH web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh>



Workplace Eye Safety

From Prevent Blind America
www.preventblindness.org

Q: Why is eye safety at work important?

A: Eye injuries in the workplace are very common. More than 2,000 people injure their eyes at work each day. About 1 in 10 injuries require one or more missed workdays to recover from. Of the total amount of work-related injuries, 10-20 % will cause temporary or permanent vision loss.

Experts believe that the right eye protection could have lessened the severity or even prevented 90% of eye injuries in accidents.

Q: What are the common causes of eye injuries?

A: Common causes for eye injuries are:

- * Flying objects (bits of metal, glass)
- * Tools
- * Particles
- * Chemicals
- * Harmful radiation
- * Any combination of these or other hazards

Q: What is my best defense against an eye injury?

A: There are three things you can do to help prevent an eye injury:

- * Know the eye safety dangers at work-complete an eye hazard assessment
- * Eliminate hazards before starting work. Use machine guarding, work screens, or other engineering controls)
- * Use proper eye protection.

Q: When should I protect my eyes at work?

A: You should wear safety eyewear whenever there is a chance of eye injury. Anyone working in or passing through areas that pose eye hazards should wear protective eyewear.

Q: What type of safety eyewear is available to me?

A: Safety eyewear protection includes:

- * Non-prescription and prescription safety glasses
- * Goggles
- * Face shields
- * Welding helmets
- * Full-face respirators

Q: What type of safety eye protection should I wear?

A: The type of safety eye protection you should wear depends on the hazards in your workplace. If you are working in an area that has particles, flying objects, or dust, you must at least wear safety glasses with side protection (side shields). If you are working with chemicals, you should wear goggles. If you are working near hazardous radiation (welding, lasers, or fiber optics) you must use special-purpose safety glasses, goggles, face shields, or helmets designed for that task.

Q: What is the difference between glass, plastic, and polycarbonate safety lenses?

A: All three types of safety lenses meet or exceed the requirements for protecting your eyes.

Glass lenses

- Are not easily scratched
- Can be used around harsh chemicals
- Can be made in your corrective prescription
- Are sometimes heavy and uncomfortable

Plastic lenses

- Is lighter weight
- Protect against welding splatter
- Are not likely to fog
- Are not as scratch-resistant as glass

Polycarbonate lenses

- Are lightweight
- Protect against welding splatter
- Are not likely to fog
- Are stronger than glass and plastic
- Are more impact resistant than glass or plastic
- Are not as scratch resistant as glass

Q: Does safety eye protection work?

A: Yes, eye protection does work.

Be Safe!!

Friendly Training Reminders

(At Bldg. X-11 unless otherwise noted)

LOTO

9 Dec - 0800-0930

INDOC

(PWC/PACDIV)

14 Dec - 0800-0930

Respirator Training

Bldg. 40

16 Dec - 0730-0930

Fall Protection Training

17 Dec - 0730-1100

AAA DIP

NAVSTA PH

20 Dec - 0730-1600

AAA Offender

29 Dec - 0700-1530

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